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Cruise Industry

Belize City, Belize- August 11th 2015 - The Belize Tourism Board would like to clarify misinterpretations of Cruise call cancellations in Belize. The normal process of scheduling calls requires advance tentative bookings for cruise lines; which allows room for planning and control of the carrying capacity of passengers in Belize City to ensure overall guest experience. This schedule, however, is not finite; which allows for a common practice of changes in ship calls with ample notification. In this situation, Carnival Cruise Line has informed of two ships being deployed to new locations; which in turn, reflects the release of 14 calls that were tentatively booked. This is one of many correspondences received from Carnival and other Cruise Lines to add and remove calls, as they finalize their 2016 schedule. This early notification allows the management of space for other cruise lines to call on Belize.

The BTB has been in discussions with the Cruise Lines regarding guest survey results and fully understands the need to improve guest experience. Hence, the following actions are being taken to enhance overall guest experience.

1. BTB in partnership with Small Business Development Center (SBDC) delivered business development training for all the groups of stakeholders in the Fort George Tourism Zone including hair braiders, tour guides, tour operators, food vendors and craft vendors. The training covered topics such as Entrepreneurship, Marketing your Product, Customer Service, Understanding your Customer, and Sales Techniques.
2. Over the past four years, the BTB within the Fort George Tourism Zone (Cruise Zone) the BTB has instituted a program to regularize all provisional guides. This July the BTB completed certification of all guides that work in the FGZ with approximately sixty seven (67) guides being regularized. Therefore, all guides working in this particular area now have either a Belize City Guide Specialized License or a General Tour Guide License. Comprehensive enforcement was carried out as of August 1st 2015, where only fully license guides are allowed to now participate in the Fort George Tourism Zone.

3. The BTB will be partnering with Aquila Center for Cruise Excellence to train tour guides that participate in the Cruise sector for the Belize City Port. Aquila is the exclusive training partner of the FCCA (Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association). These guides will be trained to Aquila Tour Guide Excellence certification standards as a specialized training for Cruise Guides. The first cohort of fifty (50) tour guides will undergo training from the 23rd to 26th October, 2015.

4. The BTB and the Belize City Council have established a formalized Fort George Tourism Zone Management Committee and have been meeting for the past few months to ensure the proper management of the FGTZ. Many of the concerns raised by Carnival and other cruise lines have been tabled to this Committee for Action. Projects being currently under revision include:

- The remodeling of the entire vendor area on North Park Street.
- Reorganizing pedestrian and traffic flow in the area.
- Instituting and enforcing parking zones and no loitering areas.
- Enforcement of trade licenses for all businesses in the FGTZ and identification of a location where each entity will operate from to better organize the traffic and create a better guest experience.

5. Lastly, the BTB along with the Tourism Police Unit have updated and implemented the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Fort George Tourism Zone particularly to ensure a better and safer guest experience in Belize City. This SOP particularly focuses on creating better business opportunities for the stakeholders of the FGTZ and also on managing the operators and their interaction with the guests in order to create a better experience as guest explore Belize City and its surrounds.

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About the Belize Tourism Board

The Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is a statutory body within the Belize Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, and it is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation. The BTB works in conjunction with members of the private sector - including the Belize Hotel Association, Belize Tourism Industry Association and Belize National Tour Operators Association – and is dedicated to building tourism in the most economically and environmentally sustainable manner. As a part of its responsibilities, the BTB promotes Belize as a premier tourism destination to both in-country and international consumers. Among its outreach to the international travel market, the BTB markets the country's unique attractions to travellers, members of the travel trade industry and media outlets in key markets.

The BTB is also dedicated to developing and implementing tourism programs that will help strengthen and grow the Belizean tourism industry; promote good destination stewardship; and instil high quality standards for accommodations and travel experiences. For more information on the BTB and its services, visit www.travelbelize.org.

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